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UNCLAS YEREVAN 000361

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT. FOR NEA/ELA AND EUR/CACEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [LE](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: RESULTS OF CONVERSATIONS WITH U.S.
ARMENIAN GROUPS

REF: (A) State 21329 (B) Yerevan 172 (C) Beirut 282

1. (SBU) Ambassador Evans began his recent tour of Armenian-American diaspora centers on February 11, only three days prior to the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri, which so drastically changed the political landscape in Lebanon. Conversations with Lebanese-origin Armenian Americans after the assassination naturally focused on that event, and on fears for the safety of the dwindling Armenian community there. In general, there was very little traction for the talking points conveyed ref A.

2. (SBU) A prominent Armenian who had recently been in Lebanon and considers Walid Jumblatt to be "like my brother" offered the following explanation. Syria provided a haven for Armenians fleeing the Turkish massacres of 1915, so Armenians are generally well-disposed toward Damascus. Syrian influence in Lebanon is so strong that "they could leave tomorrow and nothing would change." The Lebanese, he said, are "more Syrian than the Syrians." The Deuxieme Bureau was cited in this connection. Resolution 1559 was basically a deal between the French and American governments; French President Chirac imagined that he was helping Hariri. The Maronite Christians are "the problem" and Lebanese President Lahoud (whose wife and mother are Armenian) is not well regarded.

3. (SBU) An Armenian arch-bishop (Prelacy) offered somewhat more guarded comments that stressed the fragility of the Armenians' position in Lebanon and expressed fears for their future.

4. (SBU) We recognize that the situation in Lebanon is now radically transformed, and will therefore desist from holding any further discussions, e.g., with the Catholicos, unless Department wishes us to do so.

EVANS